

At Close Quarters With a Painting of Smoke

Chapter -12-



When I woke in my new apartment I had to pinch myself. I thought, *"How in the hell did I pull this off?"* So I checked out the efficiency and then decided I needed to explore downtown and the west-end. I still had the car for two more days so off I went driving all around the city. I took note of a print shop for "Hire" sign called *"Pip Printing"* near the Vanderbilt Campus and Centennial Park. It was next to a liqueur store. *"That's a good omen!"* I thought. And then the shock hit me! I had no idea how small music row was. It was only about 3 blocks. It was dinky. So I just kept driving. Soon I began to noticed that Nashville had many more churches than bars. *"That's a bad omen"*, I thought. The only other big employers at the time was insurance, banking and bible publishing. By comparison the trucking and construction industries were not as powerful but seemed to employ more people. On Sundays everything closed down for church. Church was a big deal back then for the Nashville. Most of the uneducated class was very evangelical. Maybe that was why drinking was so common. Later when I got to visit the big wig estates I realize how fucking rich these star's of country music were! Most of them were into horses. That is when I realized how political their "Bible Says" religions where. I never met a native in Nashville who didn't go to church. If I was going to make it I'd better get religious and fast! Religion went everywhere and did everything. In a funny way I related to the way they worshiped. They were like children playing in the woods. And the Nashville business culture seem to be a by-product of it. All the different faiths seem to get along very well. I really didn't grasp the meaning of the "bible-belt" until I moved there. Nature was their god. That is what they really seemed to be into. But most of the "Bible Says" evangelicals didn't even realize their bullshit was about money.

All the inter city homes had tidy lawns and there was this energy that Nashville was full of musical ghosts. There were ghosts every where. Everywhere I went there was this history of the civil war and country music. Music seem to be the more important of the two. But the civil war was the legacy of southern broken hearts and tears. Both sides had different reasons for the sadness. The racism was steeped in the master-slave traditions of the old south. And most of the people paid their respects to the tradition. Blacks knew if they they played ball that the "crackers" would give them financial rewards in return; like land, homes and job security. Those who didn't play ball had to go north. Everywhere I went the stores had photos on display of washed out musicians who never made it.

Some had become one hit wonders. Others ended up as drunks fishing down by the Cumberland River. Most when back home after a few years. A few started business and put down roots. The lucky ones got day jobs of some sort throughout the music city. At the time there seem to be 10 to 20 country legends who ruled the Grand Old Opera roost. As best I can figure the rest had regular day jobs and play the many open stages. A special few worked the studios and night clubs. They were the gatekeepers of success. They were very robust about it. I guess their family's depend on it. And then there were the "*drunks good old boy nobodies*" of Nashville. They were all very gifted songwriters and musicians who were doomed never to make it. There was only room for a few at the top. Most of people were cautious about dealing with Yankees like me. They let you know you weren't in one of their good old boys networks. If I wanted to earn their trust and help it was going to take a few years. They expected me to become one of them. So I tried but in the end only the songwriting and ghost thing stuck. Nashville was like living on my grandmothers farm back in the mid-1950s. I took to the nature side of it quickly and tried to adapt to the music city style.



That workweek I stopped by "Pip Printing" and this 19 year old manager ask for me to demo my skills on a A. B. Dick 360 printing press. I knocked out 2 or 3 print orders and her evangelical sweet ass hired me on the spot. The shop was about 4 or 5 block walk from my apartment so I was all set. So after I had a job, phone and apartment. It was a done deal. Now I had a shot at the brass ring. But there was a problem. I was punk. So I figure I'd create a country-punk thing but then discover **Jason and the Nashville Scorchers** had beat me to the punch. They were the kings of Nashville when I got there. Soon after my hire I took a lunch break at "**The Great Escape**" which was a comic book/vintage LP record store. It was about three times bigger than Chuck Kubat's store back in Cowtown. While I was shopping I found a record by **Robin Lane & The Chartbusters** called, "**Imitation Life**". The record had the seeds of V3 in it. At the time it was weirdo pop. Robin Lane was similar to **Roxanne Newman** in vocal and style, if not taste. As I paid for the record **Greg Walker** the owner's son slipped it to the bag and said, "*Good Pop*". And the next thing we're bar hopping after work and he is showing me around the local scene.

A few days later Greg started turning me on to the inner workings of the Nashville business community. Then I find out that the record store wasn't the only business his family has. They had a private hotel on music row that caters to the likes of **Bob Dylan** and **Paul McCartney**. Very private. Very privileged. They also had a record store in LA and some Studios in Nashville. Then he takes me to

his private home studio. It was a 8 track 1 inch reel system with two or three isolation booths off the main room. All this in a three story Victorian house. So I explained to him about my "object music theory" and he was hooked. He lights up like fucking Christmas tree. I was a breath of fresh air. He was so sick of the brain dead country scene! It was like I had raised him from the dead. Greg's was a punk too! He was laughing is guts out. So he agrees to be on my "*Squid Song*" project for free. His dad also owned a Nashville publishing house. Greg loved the income. It was a steady gig. He could do what ever he wanted. This is when I woke up and realized, "*Squid, you're not going to make it as a country and western star*". Nashville is into formula not creating a new type of art form. But hey, in for a penny, in for a pound! Just roll with it and see how it shakes out.

Then a big surprise hit. Around the beginning of August of 1983 there is a knock on my door and it's Tammy. So for the next 4 weeks she is living in sin with me. We listened to **Robin Lane & The Chartbusters** over and over as she teaches me the ins and outs of southern sex. Oh boy! Then toward the end of that cycle she breaks down crying and says, "*You weren't suppose to come down here. My moms afraid I'll marry you. She wants me to break it off with you. She doesn't want me to marry you. She thinks I can do much better than you*". WTF? KA-Boom! And so, I said "*ok. I only want is best for you*". And she hits the door running and turns ghost! I was fired! Goodbye Bufu! I'll miss you! A few weeks later she goes to a nightclub, has a one niter with some dude shes' never met and gets pregnant. KA-Boom! WTF? Its' over. The deal is sealed bubba boy! Then she tells my sister he's a doctor which turns out to be a lie. He was a working class sod just like me. So I ducked another child support obligation! Hip Hip Hooray! I took stock of my situation and painfully move on. I didn't come down to Nashville to start another family. I came down for the music and bufu. Both notions sank like the Titanic into the deep blue sea. I found myself back on the streets again only this time with a broken heart. Looking back I would say that Tammy just wasn't marriage material. She knew how to play the game but she just didn't know what she wanted back then. To be honest I never thought about marrying again. After Kathy and Vickie I was totally done with contracts and lawyers. Those girls worked me over pretty good. A real credit to their gender. I loved Tammy but she was too free about sex. Most guys don't want the football team fucking their wife. So old squidly hit the road running dragging his heartbroken dick in the dirt. I had learned that marriage is a blood sport not to be approached lightly. That was the first lesson Nashville taught me. I've never looked back.

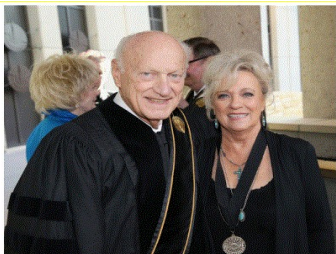
One day at work, Dana this drummer comes into the print shop. We get to talking and he tells me his cripple uncle owns a recording studio called "Champ Records". It claims to be America's Oldest Black Gospel Label. So I set up a meeting with his uncle, Jim Stanton, and we worked out a deal. Jim had been one of **Elvis'** friends and there were photos of them on the walls. I'm not sure if he worked on any of Elvis' gospel LP's but I wouldn't be surprised. Jim had bought his system from **Frank Zappa** sometime after the Release of the **Mother's Of Invention's "Freak Out"** LP. It was 20 year old tech but it got the job done. Soon afterwards I took Greg and Dana into the studio for a series of sessions

which lasted well into September of 1983. Greg played bass and keyboards and Dana played drums. We worked on 4 new songs and then re-recorded a new version of the *"The Stranger"*. The new songs were; *"Heart Of My Heart"*, *"Drinking All My Tears On Down"*, *"1st Time, 2rd Time, All The Time"*, and *"Where Had You Been"*. These were written after my arrival in Nashville. The rest of the *"Squid Songs"* project had been previously recorded over the years back in cow-town. When Jim Stanton heard what going on he immediately quit my project and gave to keys to Dana. He was into getting paid and I displayed no commercial potential for Black Gospel. *"Gee, You Think"*? Dana was Jim's assistant engineer at the studio. So Dana showed me and Greg how to run the equipment and we turned our sessions into a party. We smoked hash and drank beer while trying to lay the music down on tape. We would show up after our day jobs and party until Dana needed to crash. I got a bunch of free studio time out of the deal because Dana lost track of the time due to being too stone in the studio. That was a big no-no. If Jim Stanton knew what was going on he would have fired Dana and kicked me and Greg out. I didn't mind Jim Stanton rejecting my music at all. It allowed me time to explore his studio. There was no way I could afford that on my own. So it all came together rather nicely for me. After the sessions were over I never heard from Dana again. Maybe he was trying to please his uncle. Greg on the other hand stayed in touch. He complained about the Champ studio. It was nowhere as good as Greg's home studio. Maybe he was offended I didn't hire him for the Squid Song project. But Greg was working for free so I didn't want to push the Champ Studio issue.

Back on the job my boss was having relationship issues with her boyfriend who treated her like shit. She was totally fed up with his bullshit and ask me what she do. I told her to fuck that "other guy" at church, *"the one in the choir who want be your permanent booty call"*. She said, *"it would break Johnny's heart"*. Then I said, *"why does Johnny get to fuck other women but won't allow you fuck other guys"*? That's when Moses parted the red sea! He was the only guy she had ever been with. They had met at her evangelical church. So she started fucking the hell out of the other guy and Johnny blows up. Evangelical logic I guess! But before I could find out how the soap opera turned out my skin exploded and I had to quit the *"pimp"* printing gig. Last I heard they got married. So I guess I gave her some good advice. I still had a years supply of skin cream so I was able to heal up after a few weeks. But without a job I was back to square one. With no cash flow coming in I thought about doing day labor but that was a real brutal gig in Nashville at the time. So I hit the pavement and put in applications for a "mail clerk" gig at the insurance companies and banks downtown. Then out of the blue the **Nashville Gas Company** called me and offered me a job. (*Long after I left Nashville the company was sold and split in two. One part is now call the **Colonial Pipeline Company** and the other side became **Piedmont Natural Gas**.*) At the time **Nashville Gas** had a strange vetting process focused on nepotism. Most of the company was run by Nashville families and there may have been legal issues over their hiring practice I think. So I was "manna from heaven" because I was a Yankee. They did deep background checks then rubber stamped me for the Office Services Department. They paid about the same as the City of Columbus so I was back in the saddle so to speak. That's when I started to

draw up my plans for the **"Nashville, In Nashville"** project. Greg was still on board but this time I would hire a modern music row studio. Greg was happy with that. Once again he signed on for free which may have upset his family I think. Not sure.

By September of 1983 I was finished my six week probation and I was issued 5 uniforms. My Boss Buddy West was legally blind. He ran the Office Services department. A fat short rotund man with a very sunny disposition who thrived on company gossip. Buddy took a shine to me right away. Next there was Robert the pipe-fitter's union president/route driver; followed by Fred Nelson a black route driver comedian who kept the office constantly laughing, and Dale the printer. And then there was me the inter-office mail man. We had 4 pick up trucks and a dock downtown. Our office was on the 4th floor. Most of the routes to the suburbs took about a hour and a half. During this cycle I would go to the downtown arcade for lunch most of the time. After I had bought a car in mid-September I switched to the Shoney's restaurant in the west end for lunch. That's where all the pipe crews hung out. So over time I got to know the 10 or so service crews who installed commercial and residential pipes. One of the crew guys was good friends with **Willie Nelson's** family. That is when I heard about Willie's love of weed first hand. Once I had secured my own car I started to explore more of the suburbs. The nice thing about being the mail guy is that I heard what **Bill Denny**, the president of Nashville Gas, was up to at the time. People love to talk so I just listened. At the time Bill and John were selling **Cedarwood Publishing** to **Mel Tillis** and lobbying for **Willie Nelson** and others for the CMA awards show.

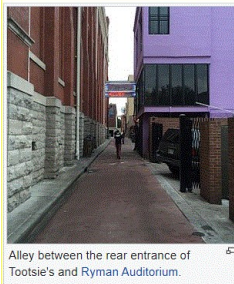


Country Music Hall Of Fame 2018 Medallion Ceremony Honors Inductees Johnny Gimble, Ricky Skaggs And Dottie West

Bill Denny's father **Jim Denny** had been the manager the **Grand Ole Opry** and founded the Cedarwood Music publishing group with **Webb Price**. Dad had been one of the Grand Ole Opry founders. Dad also had **Buddy Holly** under contract in the 1950's. Dad was also the 1st non-musician to be named into the country music hall of fame. Not only that but in 1956 he was named **Billboard's "Country and Western Man of the year"**. Jim Denny along with Acuff-Rose and Tree Publishing were the cornerstones of Nashville's country music publishing in the early 1980s. Also Bill Denny's brother John also had a few Cedarwood Music publishing hits under his belt: **"All I Want For Christmas Is A Go-Go Girl"**, **Jesus Took The Outlaw Out Of Me"**, and **"What's Tootsie Gonna Do When They Tear The Ryman Down"**.

The **Denny Brothers** (Bill & John) also owned, at the time of my hire, a recording studio called "Denny's Den", "Jed Records" and "Dollie Records". Like their dad before them both sat on the Grand Ole Opry and Country Music Association boards with Bill Denny holding the title of Opry president; In July of 2018 my old boss Bill Denny was inducted into the **Circle Guard** of the country Music Hall of Fame. The Denny family had guided the country music business in Nashville and they had numerous business interests, from **"Hatch Show Print"**

to merchandising and artists management. They were all over the place. Of course at the time I was clueless as to what it all meant. Nor was I aware of their many business contacts in the community. I was into art not business. I really paid it no mind. But I did sense that Bill Denny was slightly interested in me for some reason. This was bore out much later.

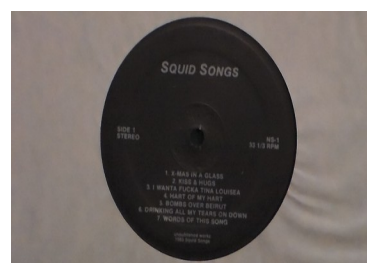
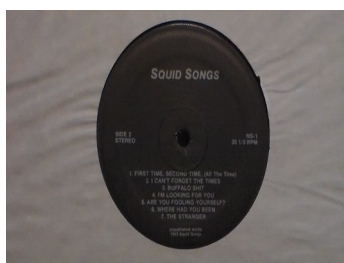
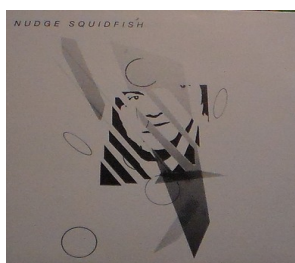


By late October of 1983 I had taken to drinking Kessler whiskey pretty hard on the weekends. I was experiencing "Blackouts". At the time Tootsie's was a run down honky-tonk bar located on lower Broadway's skid row. I would get drunk at **Tootsies Orchid Lounge** and go out the back door and pass out on the Ryman Auditorium stage. The Opry had shut down the Ryman back in 1974 and this led to the building being unlocked and vacant. At the time the drunks use to pee in the alley and Pigeons would shit all over the place. I would wake up with a terrible hang-over on the Ryman's stage right in the middle of this decaying and dis-repaired 3000 seat venue. It was hard to believe that this place use to be the heart of country music. There were ghost all over the Ryman. Especially back stage. Sometimes I thought I could still heard the music and applause of the Ryman's glory days. The stage gave off that kind of vibe even if I was legless. Other times when I woke I thought I sensed ghosts walking around. This was way before my occult training when I learn how to help those trapped "lower emotional/mental-astral shells". Little did I know that I would later encounter the ghosts of **Andrew Jackson** and the **Bell Witch** first hand. More on that later on in the story. The last Ryman show was on March 15th 1974 and they didn't reopen until October 18th 1998. The place sat empty for 20 years. But the CMA had big plans for lower Broadway and from 1984 til 1987 a aggressive gentrification project transform lower Broadway into a upscale tourist trap.

My blackouts meant that I would spend hours trying to remember where in the hell I had parked my car. Sometimes it would take me a half day of trying to find it. I'd always find it on some abandon side street a few blocks from the Ryman. The main problem for the Ryman was the Opryland Hotel complex where they did all the TV broadcasts shows. Once Opryland got going the CMA abandoned the Ryman. So I had it all to myself. After a while I switched to getting drunk behind Dolly Parton's Victorian office somewhere near music row. It was safe and clean in the ally behind her building. No ghosts. Easy to find afterwards. You could smoke weed with no problems. To help with the hang overs I would eat at some of the greatest greasy spoons on the planet. There were floozy blond waitresses looking for a husband. They would take your order and then a tattooed parolee short ordered cook would rustle up some of the best grub on the planet. Most of their customers came from the broken hearted drifter bars. A lot of the pipe crews love to eat down there during the gentrification project. I spend many a morning trying to overcome my irresponsible behavior in those eatery joints.

One of the recurring questions others would ask me was "*Why didn't you go to L.A. or New York City to do your object music*". I really didn't have a answer. It

seemed like the right thing to do at the time. Hell, I was just following my muse. In a very strange way I think the music community dug the fact that I wasn't marching to the beat of their drum. Every once in a while art trumps the commercial. They didn't agree with my object music and most thought I was insulting them. But there were some who like the ideal of a new form of music. After all, at one point in their history country and western was a new form of music. They had work hard to make it international. That took 30 years. Then one day a young preacher and his wife knocked upon my door. They were about 20 years of age. They had a church and begged me to go. I wasn't into it. But to please them I did, but it was a typical evangelical gig and I wanted no part of it. So I graciously bowed out claiming I was Jewish. For some reason the evangelicals don't pursue you if you claim your Jewish. At least that has been my experience over the years.



By **October of 1983** Greg and I were back bar hopping and on the look out for girls. As far as I know Cantrell's was the only new wave and punk bar so we trolled it a lot. About this time I decide I needed to get back out on stage. Up till then I had always been in a group. Now I had to learn how to fly solo. Mike Rep and Ron House had learned that back in 1979. Now I had to catch up. Greg said a lot of A & R guys would make you play your songs live so as to access your abilities. So I began to go to the Continental Hotel out in Murfreesboro Tennessee for the open stage night. It was my 1st attempt at playing solo in front of a live audience. But I totally sucked. The audience consisted of 4 or 5 songwriters. The Continental was down low on the open stage food chain. The year before in June of 1982 the up and coming "Blue Bird Cafe" had just open their doors. I use to drink at **Amy Kurland's Blue Bird Cafe** all the time during my time in Nashville. I doubt that she knew who I was because most of the time I just watched. However I did preform their once or twice. But it wasn't until July 1st 1984 when Amy Kurland held her **1st Writer's Night** that things took off. After that The Blue Bird Cafe became the industry "go to spot" for new Nashville songwriters. On that night Mr. Don Schlitz, the guy who wrote "**The Gambler**" for **Kenny Rogers** was the judge. I was there but I am not sure if I performed that night or not. The Blue Bird by that time had become the Top of the Pops for Nashville writers. That's were all the professionals flocked to in 1984. But that **October of 1983**, at the Continental Hotel, I clearly understood that I wasn't ready for that higher level of songwriting. No way.

I was told by the Continental bar tender that **Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers** would stop by for drinks. The bar tender when on to tell me Larry was a "jerk" because he had a few hit records. The barkeep must have been a

songwriter. I was told that most of the business folks didn't like Mr Gatlin. Not sure if that was true. Larry Gatlin is known for his rich falsetto singing style and for the unique pop-inflected songs he wrote and recorded in the 1970s and 1980s. Some of Gatlin's biggest hits include "**Broken Lady**", "**All the Gold in California**", "**Houston (Means I'm One Day Closer to You)**", "**She Used to Be Somebody's Baby**", and "**Talkin' to the Moon**". During this time, country music trended heavily towards slick pop music arrangements. So when my turn on the Continental Hotel stage came I sang "**Kisses and Hugs**", "**Drinking All My Tears On Down**" and "**1st Time, 2rd Time, All the Time**". No one made a sound. Not a peep! It was as if I never sang at all. "*Talking strike three you're out Bubba boy*"! They must have thought I was mocking country music because at the time I had adopted Ron House's approach to singing. So I left the stage totally depressed and ashamed that I had made such a god dam ass of myself. Their stander of professionalism was way over my head. It is a humbling thing to suck on stage. I don't recommend it.

By Thanksgiving of 1983 I began to search for a recording studio for my "**Nashville, In Nashville**" project. I had returned for a weekend visit to Columbus and discovered that the local music scene had exploded. Then Jim Shepard had turned me on to **Eric The Swed** (A.K.A. **Doctor Laborious**) who lived in Paris. Eric was working on the European Space Program. I soon found out that Eric was even a bigger fan of weirdo music than Jim Shepard was. He loved **Captain Beefheart** and **The Residents**. Most of Swed's music reflected that. At the time Jim and Roxanne were living Forsythe Ave. It was a single 2 floor house and was a upgrade from their Hudson Ave duplex. In the meantime I had made arrangements with Volunteer Records to press 250 copies of my **Squid Song** project. There were problems with the test pressing and they seem to be at pains about making the corrections. Later on they totally fucked up the printing and it took a few weeks to come to an agreement. A small run for Volunteer was about 25,000 copies so I was not afforded the customer care that the major labels received. I honestly thought they were going to blow me off but by March of 1984 they issued a letter of credit for the balance if I would just except the misprinting and fucked up pressing. I did and saved myself about a \$1000 on the deal.

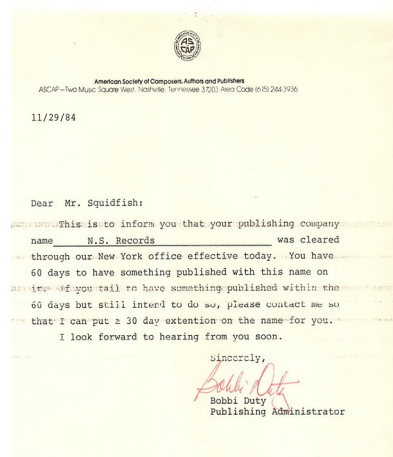
Jim and Roxann had put a new band together called, "**Skull Bank**". It featured **Roxann Newman** on vocal, **Jim Shepard** vocal and guitar, **Ray Vellani** on stick bass, **Mike Rep** on vibes and **Tommy Jay** on drums. They were opening for **David Thomas** (Pere Ubu) in a few weeks and Jim had just wrote the song "**Babylon Film-Set**" for the show I think. There is a wonderful recording of that live show which captures all the magic of that night. The performance also features "**Union View**" which Jim and I recorded during Tommy Jay Jamaica trip. **Pere Ubu** is an American rock group formed in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1975. Despite a variety of long-term and recurring band members, singer David Thomas is the only constant. Jim had always been a fan of Thomas as a writer. In my opinion I think Skull Bank Stole the show that night. At least according to the recording Jim sent me.

When I got back to the job I realized I was going to need to make more money so I put in a union bid for a file clerk in the accounting department. It paid \$2 more an hour so I left Buddy West, who was pissed I jumped ship, and went to work for Jerry McCord who ran the accounting department. From the professional songwriters I was hanging around at the time I learned that their craft was extremely boring and totally dependent on formula. To be honest I do not recommend being a musician or actor as a career choice. Most of us end up as dish washers! But if you must, then I say go for it. You'll learn more from your failure than from the success. What Nashville taught me was it is all about the "craft". Fame is a millstone around your neck. Better to be a nobody drunken songwriter than a rich and famous psychopath millionaire. But if you choose it then go for it. Don't look back. It doesn't matter either way because at the end of your journey you'll see that you were meant to play this game. But know that the game ain't for keeps. You don't get to keep the kudos or the money. You just get to borrow it for a spell. And someone watching you out there in your audience is your replacement. Someone is going to take the crown from you. Most of us end up with a damage nervous systems from the experience. That is what fame does to you in the long run.



One day as I was filing some documents and my new boss Jerry McCord comes up to me and says *"you have got the rest of the day off with pay. I am taking you out to Opryland to meet Minnie Pearl"* WTF? **Minnie Pearl**, was an American country comedian who appeared at the Grand Ole Opry for more than 50 years (from 1940 to 1991) and on the television show Hee Haw from 1969 to 1991. She graduated from Ward-Belmont College (now **Belmont University**), at the time Nashville's most prestigious school for young ladies, where she majored in theater studies and dance. Minnie had a chain of chicken shops all over Nashville. Later on the Nashville Songwriters Association paid for my songwriter classes at Belmont college. So Jerry and I drove out to the Opryland hotel and had lunch under the enormous glass roof. There on the steps of the winding stair case was Miss Minnie Pearl waiting for us. Jerry and her were friendly and he introduced me as I shook her hand. She was a funny and cheerful lady and I didn't say a word. But I could tell she knew a lot of the people I worked with. Afterwards I toured the hotel and it was massive. The TV studio was a major operation. The stage was impressive and set up for about 5000 people I guess. The technology was state of the art. Everything was upscale elite bullshit. It was eye popping. There were acts coming and going. People wanting autographs. And I was trying to figure out how in the hell I could ever fit into this business model. I wasn't sure why I was afford this tour. But somebody wanted me to experience the cash flow side of the music. In the meantime I got the name of a studio on music row call "Fat Tracks". So I set up a meeting and explained what I was trying to do. **Bob Krusen** had worked with the **Oak Ridge Boys** and later **G Love and Special Sauce**. Bob seemed interested in my art. So we worked out a deal where I would get a break on price and recorded once a month until the project was completed. He normally charged \$125 buck an hour but only charge me \$75 which was hard on my budget but doable. Also, Greg was on

board for free which meant that I had a real shot at it. So I sent out the "**Squid Song**" LP to all the majors and nobody responded. My first LP was a "Stiff". I could not even give the mother fucker away. Zero interest. Of course all my friends back in cowtown liked it but they were into the punk and new wave markets. So then I retreated and realized that I needed to study song writing theory.



By March of 1984 I had set up my NS Records Tax ID with the State of Tennessee. Also I filed with ASCAP under the same name and started to hunt for a distributor. Again there was only massive silence. I made the rounds to all the majors and even saw **Kristoffer Kristofferson** headed into the same office, no doubt to do some sort of business. Kristofferson was an American singer-songwriter and actor. Among his songwriting credits are the songs "**Me and Bobby McGee**", "**For the Good Times**", "**Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down**", and "**Help Me Make It Through the Night**", all of which were hits for other artists. Then someone suggested that I'd have a better chance getting my foot in the door if I joined the Nashville Songwriters Association. I did and was able to hustle them into paying for my classes at Belmont College.

The song writing class was a wake up call for me. On the one hand I was taught by the billboard hit makers, and on the other it was a Nashville good old boy click. No way I was going to be allowed access. But the thing that really annoyed me was the strict adherence to country and western formula. That is how they judge you back then. No punk, rock or blues material. Songs like "**Tina Louise**" were an insult to their cash flow. We were expected to preform our new originals in fount of the class. Then the class would dissect the holy shit out of it. Most of the students were kind of competitive. Every once in a while someone would get noticed. That lucky person would receive special treatment from the bigwigs. I played "**Kisses and Hugs**", "**Drinking All My Tears On Down**" and "**1st Time, 2rd Time, All the Time**" and was very surprised nobody booed. But the big wigs wanted top 40 and so all my songs were dismissed. So I just sat at the back of the class and listened to all their bullshit! Still, I learned a lot about the mechanics of songwriting. To be honest, those classes taught me how to develop and polish my craft. Up till that point I was always a half-bake songster.



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Bob McCracken
Bill Martin
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Kenny O'Dell
Kerry Patrick O'Neil
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Maggie Cavender
Executive Director

May 22, 1984

Dear Squid,

Thank you for your application for membership in our organization. NSAI is pleased to welcome you as a member. Your membership card and receipt for your dues are enclosed.

Your interest in this organization that exists for the benefit of you, the songwriter, is appreciated, and we are happy to count you as a member of the ever-growing Nashville Songwriters Association, International....because

IT ALL BEGINS WITH A SONG!

Maggie Cavender
Maggie Cavender
Executive Director

enclosures:

NUDGE SQUIDFISH
3521 CENTRAL AVE. APT. C
NASHVILLE, TN. 372005

"IT ALL BEGINS WITH A SONG!"

The whole time I was in Nashville I didn't have any money. The studio cost and child support were killing me. So when I saw a union "Job Bid" notice for assistance 36 inch pipe-fitter I jump on it. It was \$2 bucks more than my clerk gig and would get me the resources to complete my "Nashville, In Nashville" project. But what I didn't understand was pipe construction happened in all kinds of weather and was hard brutal work. So, **Ed Kelly** accepted me on his 36 inch gas mains crew. He was tasked with putting in these new main lines down on lower Broadway near Tootsie and the Ryman. It was dangerous brutal work. And for a month I was so sore I could barely walk. I went straight to bed when I got off work. These people had been doing this hard labor riff all their lives but I was determined to fit in on my new job. I needed the money for my project.

Their was **Ed Kelly** the supervisor, **Putty** the pipe fuser, **Old Black John** the 70 year old Jackhammer guy, **Tucker** the army ranger washout and black **Bo** the pipe locator. From 8 to 5 I was living on a dirty oily 10 wheeler truck. Some of the fittings for 36 inch pipe weight 75 pounds and I was expected to carry them at least 2 blocks by my self. Most of the time I just used a shovel and dug 10 foot by 6 holes for the Putty and old Black John. Every one was as strong as a bull. In time the work made me stronger. I would always be working in water, six feet below street level, in the rain or snow. Every once in a while if we got ahead of schedule Ed Kelly would let us get drunk and smoke weed on the back of the truck where nobody could see you. Then we would hit the porno shops that dotted the Lower Broadway scene near **Ernest Tubb's Record Shop**. You could get a hand or blow job from the girls at a reasonable price. They had viewing booths for naked dancers or hot steamy sex videos that cost \$1 a minuet. All of

that was in eye popping technicolor! They even gave you towels to clean up yourself up with. Of course the city was fighting to close these places down because they wanted to extend the Opryland hotel tour buses to Tootsies'. In the end they succeeded.

By April of 1984 I was beginning to get the hang of my new job. I got to know the black crew and they told me some wonderful stories about **Billy Cox** and **Jimi Hendrix** who lived in Nashville after their Army gig in 1961 was over. The two of them lived in Clarksville, Tennessee, and began playing gigs on the Chitlin' Circuit soon after. From what I gathered the boys did some partying during this time. They mostly stayed in the black community. Later on Jimi would move to New York and then London where he made it big. During my time in Nashville there was this thing about mixing socially with blacks. Over the years I had lived with, worked for and had black lovers. But that was a big "no no" in Nashville at the time. But because I was a "Yankee" the whites tended to look the other way.

The two supervisors of all the construction crews were **Mr. Ball** and "**Bad Daddy Hale**". They were quintessential southern gentleman. In my mind they looked out after their men. One of the curious things I soon discovered was that every one whether office or in construction carry a knife. It was a Nashville tradition I think. Back then civilians didn't own guns. Only hunters had guns. This is slightly before the NRA took control of the Washington politicians. Knives were use to settle disputes among the crews. Especially when a game of dice got out of control. I saw people gamble away a whole week's worth of wages in those "crap" games. I even made a few hundred from time to time. On paydays the crews would get liquored up and throw dices. I always limited my self to \$20 dollars. Once I reached that point just I walked away. According to the union rules once I finished my probation I had to tap and install a valve on a high pressures 2 inch line to keep the job. So I climbed into the testing hole and began to install the valve when suddenly a high powered blast of gas blew off my safety glasses and helmet. Holy Shit! I saw my helmet get launched 25 feet over my head. It was a Neil Armstrong moment. "One small step for man, one giant leap for Squidfish". Shit was rocking but I stayed on task and finally installed that god dam valve! To celebrate our boss took us all out to eat. My ordeal was over. My project was safe. Thank god.

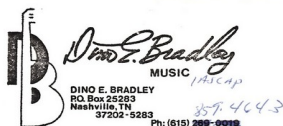
Bob Kurse and I had started our first recording session together back January of 1984. Bob, Greg and I were a good easy fit together. Bob kept it moving forward by staying focused on the music. On the other hand me and Greg would smoke weed, drank whiskey and party our asses off in the studio. Just as long as the results were good Bob didn't have a problem with any of it. To me a recorded producer is someone who gets out of the way lets the artist create the music. Bob to his credit rolled like that. We were using a 32 track MCI board and Studer 2 inch reel deck. Studer was a Swiss designer and manufacturer of audio equipment for recording studios and broadcasters. Around this time I heard a crazy ass rumors about **George Jones**. He was involved in several high-speed car chases with police, which were reported on the national news, and one arrest was filmed by a local TV crew. Rumor had it when it was time to show up in court

Jones just blew the judge off. I was amazed to hear that the judge then simply dismissed the case. Crazy fucking hillbillies! Rumor had it Jones was off the hook. No big deal. Every one in Nashville knew about his drinking problem but I guess if you give people joy they'll overlook a multitude of sins.

By May of 1984 my black outs were becoming very common. Most of the time I would wake up in the back seat of my car wondering how the fuck I got there. Then something very strange began to occur. Legend had it that **John Bell** may have defiled an Indian burial grounds and was cursed by a witch from a local tribe. Others say it was his own daughter **Betsy** who was the witch, or at least worked with a witch. Also, rumor had it that **Andrew Jackson** witness the witch phenomena first hand while visiting the Bell homestead. Moreover, I was told that the the "**Bell Witch**" had befriended the **President Jackson**. It seems that the Bell Witch felt sorry for the way the national press had treated **President Jackson's** wife Rachel. There were certain places around Nashville that the ghost would visit. I was told to stay away from these locations. It was rumored that the spook was able to speak, affect the physical environment, shape shift, was clairvoyant and was able to be in more than one place at the same time. Cryptozoologists have made similar claims about strange events. The Ohio filmmaker **Seth Breedlove** has a series of Ohio documentaries which share a lot of common denominators with the bell witch story: *The Minerva Monster (2015)*, *Beast of Whitehall (2016)*, *Boggy Creek Monster (2016)*, *The Mothman of Point Pleasant (2017)* and *The Invasion of Chestnut Ridge (2017)*. Totally off the wall paranormal stuff.

The bell witch seemed to have little patience for abusive behavior towards women. She even had less tolerance towards drinking which led to these unethical behaviors in men. No doubt rumor and truth tend to get mixed up over the decades. But my personal experiences over time tends to support the notion of these ghosts being real. **H.P. Blavatsky** in her book, "**The Key To Theosophy**" gives a detailed account of the mechanics of these sort of events from the occult P.O.V. As the summer began I started to experience nightly visits by the **Bell Witch** and **President Jackson**. At first they came into my sleep. Later on, shadows would speak when I was awake. They urged me "*For god sake son, stop your drinking*". At first I thought it was "all in my mind" and paid no attention. It all began with a few stick bruises on my legs. Then later strange shadows hung over my bed urging me to quit drinking. After about four weeks of nightly lectures they became more aggressive. That is when the nightly cane beatings started. Then one night I got the holy shit beat out of me. I remember trying to block them but they would physically hold me down and really pour it on. In the morning I discovered about 30 black and blue bruises all over my body. Something had really worked my ass over. I was in shock. WTF? So I said fuck it I'm done. Then magically the beatings just stop. At the time I didn't know anything about the paranormal. When I returned back to Columbus Ohio that all changed. But this was the first time in my life I had experienced something so fucking weird. More on that in the following chapters. I will say that history has many of these sort of recorded events. There is a curse alleged to be cast upon anyone who disturbs the mummy of an ancient Egyptian, especially a pharaoh.

This curse, which does not differentiate between thieves and archaeologists, is claimed to cause bad luck, illness, or death. It should be noted that **John Bell** is rumored to have died from the Bell Witch's curse.



Studio —
2522 Tinnin Road
Goodlettsville, TN
37072

One day in June of 1984 I ran into my old friend from my store days at Whitey Lunzar Music. I was checking out guitars at Gruhn's Guitar in Nashville when I ran into **Dino Brady**. Dino had moved to Nashville a few years before I did and was now doing guitar work for **Hank Williams Jr.** I was kind of surprised by that. But even more so when he invited me out to his new 24 track studio in Goodlettsville Tennessee. It was a secluded 2 floor cedar-wood log cabin out in the middle of nowhere. It was state of the art and had a control booth overlooking the orchestra pit. I think it had a deck overlooking the woods. So I ask Dino if he would do some free guitar work on my LP. He agreed and I gave him the time and place of the session. Then after the Dino session all hell broke loose between Bob Kruse and his partner over their fat track studio business relationship. I can't be sure but I don't think his partner wanted him to be working on my music. I wasn't the most popular of people among the good old boy click. He might have thought I was insulting country music. I wasn't. I love country. I was just being myself. Maybe I was bad for business? Oh well! Soon both sides had lawyers and my master tape became a pawn in a six week legal battle. When Bob called to inform me that his partner had my master I became depressed. Bob reassured me that he would get it back so I just sucked it up. Lawyers have always been the bane of my existence. It was the most important lesson I had to learn as an artist: what ever you do *"Always keep control and ownership of your songs and masters."*

By July of 1984 I had been going to the **Blue Bird Cafe** on a regular basis to hear a bunch of songwriters demo their songs. Almost all of them belonged to the Nashville Songwriters Association. So, it is little wonder that on January 1st 2008 the Nashville Songwriters Association bought the **Blue Bird Cafe** which had become a launching pad for many a career. To try to gain some credibility I took the stage and preformed my **"Kisses and Hugs"** along with **"1st time, 2nd time, All The Time"**. I wish I would have had a video, but back in the early days of the Blue Bird, nobody gave much thought about it. Most of the songwriters out of politeness gave applause but I knew I sucked. But at least some of the Belmont crowd gave me some respect for trying. Open mic could be a brutal experience and most of the writers were so much better than me. On the other hand, none of them left the confines and comforts of the form. I was the only one who was

experimenting outside the box.

So as I was waiting for a resolution between **Bob Kruse** and his partner over their Fat Track Studio business dispute, my old boss Jerry McCord send me a backstage pass to the 1984 CMA Fan Fair show out at the Nashville fairgrounds. Once again I would get paid for going. **Lee Greenwood** is an American country music artist. Greenwood is known for his patriotic signature song "**God Bless the U.S.A.**", which was originally released and successful in 1984, and became popular again during the Gulf War in 1991 and after the September 11, 2001, attacks. Talk about milking a tune! Old Greenwood got paid 3 times! So there I was backstage with him watching him do his thing and thinking to myself *"this isn't what I want to do. I not a organ grinder monkey tipping his hat for coins and passing out opium to the masses"*. But that was where I was headed if I wanted to play country music. He chatted to me a bit as he was signing autographs. He was very friendly for a "Big Time Republican". And, I was a long way from my Jimi Hendrix Experience. It was not cool. It was about the baby needing new shoes! I thought, *"what the fuck am I doing"*? On the other hand I got a mega dose of professionalism crammed down my throat. The merchandising was massive; Tee-shirts, coffee cups, posters and books. Old Lee was raking it in. He was milking the brain dead consumer thing. Not my cup of tea.

There was a huge open tent backstage where all his technology staff and business reps hung out. Why in the hell I was granted access to the promise land was beyond me. So I mixed about and got a blast of backbiting and business slander. So there I was looking out at about 5000 people cheering for **Lee Greenwood**. It was like doing acid for the first time. WTF? A few days later **Carla Lust**, my old band mate from the **True Believers** came down for the weekend and we went out to this bar for drinks. All the locals songwriters hung out there but I wasn't one of them. She claimed that she saw "**Bobby Bare**" drinking there but I had no idea who the fuck he was at the time. Bare is an American country music singer and songwriter, best known for the songs "**Marie Laveau**", "**Detroit City**" and "**500 Miles Away from Home**". He is the father of **Bobby Bare Jr.**, also a musician. I am still not sure which one she says she saw. Hell, I don't even remember most of my songwriter instructors from Belmont College. Most of them were top 40 billboard. Maybe not knowing who somebody "is" might have put some of them off. It didn't help me. Nothing personal. Every one who really knows me will attest that I am a space cadet of the first order when it comes to remembering names and faces. It has been a life long problem for me. Ask Rep or Tommy Jay. So I went back to digging ditches on the crew and heard a few story's about the country and western stars of Nashville.

In late July of 1984 I was laying pipe to **Mrs Friedman's Pawn Shop** a few doors down for Tooties. It took about 2 weeks to run a 1 inch line from the 36 inch mains. A lot of musicians would sell her their gear for bus fair back home. I began to take my lunch breaks talking to her and found out she had been a best friend to **Pasty & Charlie Cline**. Not only this she knew **Willy Nelson** and

Waylon Jennings among many others. Both are American singers, songwriters, and musicians. They are best known as some of the founding pioneers of the Outlaw Movement. She explained that at one time they got drunk and were so depressed about going nowhere in their careers that they laid down in the middle of Lower Broadway and wanted to be run over by a bus. Of course the cops were called and about an hour later they showed up and negotiated for another hour before the outlaws would give up on their quest. Mrs Friedman had given me some unexpected encouragement. But it was a false hope. I could never be a businessman like Willy and Waylon. Not in my DNA.

Our crew had a rent a cop called Charlie; one of Nashville's finest. He told me the way the police handle trouble was to wait an hour or so until things calm down then show up and write the report. This was for the officers safety. Back in Cow-town the cops shot first and then ask questions later. In Nashville at the time they would let the winos "fight it out". Later on they would collect the wounded then file the reports. The Emergency squads also followed this procedure. But out in the upscale urban area's the Cops were all over it. There was too much big money at stake. Most of the suburbanites were educated and rich. I don't think patrolman Charlie was pulling my leg. One day a drunken driver hit skipped a backhoe. An impressive feat of skill and ingenuity. Charlie lit out after him with gun drawn. Charlie was ready to put some hot lead into the villain if he didn't stop. But the guy skedaddle and a highly pissed off rent a cop chased in hot pursuit. I guess they work the dude over pretty good when they caught him then threw his buttocks in jail.

I eventually bought a Degas bass off of **Mrs Friedman** and years later gave it to Greg Casey a few years before his death. I had hoped his music would help him with his addiction but it didn't work out. Mrs Friedman's pawn shop had been around for years and she had volumes of stories to tell. I wished I would have recorded some of her stories but at the time I didn't have the presence of mind to cognate with. Soon after **Carla Lust 's** visit **Tommy Jay** and the **General Robert E. Lee** came to Nashville for a weekend visit. So I took them to Tootsie for a few drinks and gave them a tour of my new hood. We then started to bar hop and I was getting a little too drunk. When we came to this one bar with an open stage I tried to jump up on stage and sing a few of my songs. Not sure if the sound man turned off the P.A. But **Tommy** and **The General** were clearly embarrass by my bad behavior. A little bit later **Bob Krusen** called to tell me he had my master tapes back. Cool! He had secured a private recording session at **Elvis' Old RCA Studio B**, which at the time was only open for tourist viewing.

So me and Bob recorded **Greg Walkers "Got To Get Ready For You"** Object Music style. Some of the other engineers took notice of our shenanigans and busted out laughing. When I recorded a Coffee Pot percolating they were hooked. They were rolling on the floor. They were hardcore country types who were bored to death with country formulas. I took it as a good omen. Maybe there was hope after all? Greg original version was punk. When I played my version for him he was pleased. Then he told me he was moving out to L.A. to take over his family business interests. If not for Greg wisdom and advice I would

have turn tail and run back for Ohio. It would be the last time I ever saw him. Then one of the lawyers told me that the big wigs wanted songwriters who could act on film. Acting? Up to that point acting had not been on my radar. So I dropped by the **Vanderbilt Theater Department** looking to some free acting classes. I was referred to **The John Galt West End Theater** which was run by former Vanderbilt graduate students I think. Next thing I new I had signed on for a 2 month run of **Jean Paul Sartre's "No Exit"** and **"True West"**, a play by American playwright **Sam Shepard**. **Jean Paul Sartre was a** French philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic. **The John Galt West End Theater** took its name from the main character in **Ayn Rand's** book **Atlas Shrugged**. I worked in the control room handling the lights and sound board. Also I was task with creating the many eyed statue in Sartre's play No Exit.



Around this time I decided I could save lots of money on studio time so I bought Teac 144 cassette deck and a Roland 909 drum machine. This really help with my music. I would send demos to Jimbo, Tommy and Rep and they seemed to like where I was going with it. Then around the end of September of 1984 I was told to go down to the **Tennessee Performing Arts Center** and sign up for an acting class which somehow was already paid for. Not sure how that happen? It was a 6 week class and we were expected to write and preform a 5 minute monologue. But there was a catch. The Actor **Mickey Rooney** who appeared in more than 300 films would judge our performance. Oh Shit! So I worked out a skit but on the big day I freaked out and was a no show. I had never been exposed to that kind of stage stress before. Our class met twice a week for 2 hours. The John Galt theater had prepared me for becoming an actor but this totally overwhelmed me. The day before my performance I was a basket case and

took to drinking again. Needless to say, some of the acting professionals were disappointed in my behavior but I just didn't have the guts. I could sing, play and write for stage but acting terrified me. The memory work was overwhelming. I would forget my lines or blow my speech or timing. On the other hand I really wanted to become an actor but I just didn't have the chops. The next day I went out and bought a bag of pot and tried to forget about it. On the way to the truck crew the bag fell out of my pocket on to the ground. When I got to the truck Tucker said, **"Hey, you dropped your weed"**. I was horrified. So I ran out on the down low snatched it and headed back to the truck. The crew thought I was an Idiot. Kelly said, *"If the big wigs would have seen it you would have been fired on the spot"* It took a while to live that one down.

THE OFFENSE

NEWSLETTER

THE FIFTY-SECOND

November 30, 1984

1184
MAGNOLIA
THEATRE
\$75



GREAT PLAINS take a break during the recording of their new LP.
A bit musty perhaps, but Columbus' finest recording studios nonetheless.

Nudge, good to see these boys getting recognition they deserve.

John Cale/Jim Shepard review on page 5.

That thanksgiving of 1984 I went to the Nashville airport and ran into **Ricky Skaggs**. Ricky Skaggs, is an American country and bluegrass singer. I sat in the

lobby across from him and watched him stumble through some legal papers from his brief case. He look stress. *"Maybe somebody has their hands into his cook jar"* I thought. Then I boarded a commuter jet bound for Columbus. They were only 3 other passengers on the plane. So I grabbed up a magazine and there in the centerfold was a plane crash. When a female passenger ask what I was reading I just handed the magazine to her. She didn't look too pleased! All during the flight I kept thinking about that photo. So when we safely landed at port Columbus I was a really happy shit. That weekend I passed out a few Squid Songs LP to my Cow-town friends who mistakenly thought I was getting somewhere in Nashville. When I got back on the job a bitter cold snow storm had hit Nashville hard. Back then if a ¼ inch of snow fell they close Nashville down because they didn't have a snow removal program. People just didn't know how to drive on snow and the city got overwhelmed by auto accidents. Then I got a phone call from my boss early Saturday morning calling me into work. A 36 inch main had broken in half and a dangerous situation had develop. Nobody had winter coats and we had to take turns digging up the road. We couldn't get the backhoe in and traffic was a total mess because most of the drivers abandoned their cars on the road. We had a oil burning heater in the crew cabin but it stunk like hell. At least we could warm up between our 15 minuet digging shifts. It was bitter cold and I had 3 layers on, but still, it didn't help much. We had to dig down about ten feet below street level to seal the 36 inch main. We spend the weekend battling frozen ground and bitter cold. It was a terrible experience. So when I saw a printing press operator posting back in office services I jump on it.

By Christmas of 1984 I was back in the nice warm building running the printing press. Buddy West was overjoyed to have me back. There was this old guy named Jerry Cloony in the purchasing department who was a total jerk to everyone. I always avoided him. He had 30 years in on the job and refused to retire. It seem to me that he enjoyed causing other people discomfort. I sensed that everyone didn't like him. Then one day he had a heartache at his desk and died. Boom! The very next day the the whole department served up ice cream and cake in honor of his "enforced retirement". They even invited our department. Now I'm not the kind of person who passes up on a free deli-tray so I went to their office party and was kind of shocked to see how happy everyone was. Of course it might have been the psychological effect of Christmas but I felt they were really happy to be rid of that fat fuck. That is when I decided I would focus on the good things in my life. I would try to be of service to others. You never know when your time is up. So, I decide I wouldn't hide my mistakes anymore. I would try to run others more slack in my judgments of their behaviors. Jerry was probably very good to his family I figured.

By **January of 1985** I was coming to the end of my project. Bob and I had most of it in the can. So I began to contact pressing plants and silk screen printing shops for a 300 copies run. After being kick out of a few studio for trying to do my music it felt good to be coming to the end of my quest. About this time the major record labels launched a campaign to kill off cassettes mix-tapes. They lobbied the government to create laws to make it illegal to make copies of their LPs. In all the major publication they ran the ad: *"Piracy Kills Music Labels"*.

That is when I when rogue. That is when capitalism step over the line. Years later software company are pulling the same type of shit. They try to force you to buy updates by fucking up your programs. Fuck Them! My new record **Nashville, in Nashville** would be ready by March of 1985 and I began to compile a lists of college radio and fanzines that might be friendly for reviews. Next came **Tipper Gore** who was hustling the **Parents Music Resource Center** to lobby congress against the emerging Rap Music scene. The **PMRC** got into it with Frank Zappa who told them to basically fuck off! The evangelicals hate porno. They wanted it banned. But Frank held his ground and argued before congress the rights of free speech. This really pissed off the evangelicals who where concerned with the possible erosion of their "cash flow" as more and more poor kids flocked to bands like **N.W.A.** Church attendance was losing the youth vote. It was something their business models dreaded. So the "W.A.S.P" evangelicals hatched a 40 year campaign to secure control of the congress and supreme courts by way of voter repression tactics. Their main focus was on suppressing the Black, Abortion and Gay Rights movements of the mid-1980s. Also, they expanded their religious school system and secured tax payer funding. *"So much for the separation of church and state",* I thought.

I was gradually beginning to see that the **Do-It-Yourself Studio Concept** I had embraced before I came into the music business environment was a far superior approach artistically and financially. Somehow I had got sucked up into all the Nashville glamour. But now that my project was finally done I began to reassess my approach. I don't like lawyers. Never have, Never will. I understand that their *"baby need new shoes"*. But it appeared to me that when they wanted to steal from public coffers they do so by adding layers of complexity to their written texts. If you kept laws subject to interpretations you guarantee a steady cash flow. Its good for lawyers but bad for justice. Lawyers should only get paid if they win your case. And, I feel that lawyers should not be allowed to hold political office. If they do they tend to steal taxes from the public. I feel all lawyers and doctors should be on a fixed salary and "paid by the government". The 1st lesson I learned as a **Do-It-Yourself** artist is to choose your recording equipment very carefully. Know your equipment inside and out. That is the only way to learn how to think outside the box as a record producer. Moreover, If your looking for fame and riches you're just wasting your time and talent. 99% of the music and movie markets hate fine art. Their role is to keep the masses from thinking for themselves. They need brain dead consumers as repeat customers. Any thing new they won't embrace until they see the "cash cow" of it. The truth is that the public loves to get their thinking done by proxy. That is the biggest insult a explorer like myself can face in the arts. Stick with what you like. Stick with what you know. Explore the unknown. Try to grow and let the chips fall where they may. If you do then the day will surly come when you'll have to choose between art and commerce. It is a trial by fire that the "new" requires. The "old ways" only cares about sales. Never try to make a living off your art. You'll rarely create anything truly new if you do.

By July I began to send out copies of my **Nashville, in Nashville** LP to fanzines and radio stations around the world. Once again there was little response. Not

very surprising. Then on July 13th of 1985 I watched the **MTV** broadcast of "**Feed The World - Live Aid**". By that time I had given up on my Nashville dream. I was getting reports of family issues back in Ohio so I made a weekend trip and discovered that my family needed me back. So as the notion of stardom faded from view. I began to plan my withdraw and relocation back to Cow Town. It was a very, very sad decision. I loved Nashville deeply. I always will. But I knew that the stage door was still open for me back in Ohio. So on August 1st 1985 I turned in my resignation to the Nashville Gas Company. My friends and bosses were shocked. Some of the big wigs told me that if I hung in there for 5 more years they would help me become a star. I would get the support I needed. But I didn't want to become another formula entertainer. I had taken my notion of country music as far as I could. Now it was time to try something new. I was heartbroken about my choice. But I had to do what needed to be done. I had crossed that bridge many, many times since. So I packed up my stuff and disconnected from the Nashville scene.

On the day I left it poured down rain. It was almost as if the city was crying about my leaving. I had against all odds released two LPs during my stay there. Even to this day my musical core reflects the Nashville approach to songwriting. And this influence can be clearly seen in my work with **Kevyn and the Kasualties** and **V3**. I've always tried to merge with Pop and Experimental in my songwriting. Mo-Town and the British invasion of the 1960 have had a profound influence on me in that regard. So I watched one door close and another door open in my life. Like Jim Shepard use to tell me, "*Squid, we do our work and then we go*". Now it was my turn to go. The adventure was just beginning. Back in Old Cow-town new things were calling out to me, "*Check this out Squid! It's really fucking cool!*" Destiny was waiting for me. What was she up to I thought? So near the end of August of 1985 I hit the road for Columbus Ohio. One door had closed now another door was opening. What would I find? Little did I know that things were about to get surreal. On with the show. Grab the dice and take a roll.